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THE TALK OF THE TOWN

Notes and Comment

THE best news we have heard in the last couple of weeks comes from a "semi-secret" organization known as the John Birch Society, which is dedicated to "fighting Communism." The good news is that the founder and head of the society has discovered each of the following persons to be a Communist agent: Dwight D. Eisenhower, the former President of the United States; Earl Warren, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court; the late John Foster Dulles, who was Secretary of State; and Allen W. Dulles, the director of the Central Intelligence Agency. At first glance, admittedly, there is something almost frightening in the thought that so many Communists were able to creep into such high positions in the government. But upon mature reflection the reader will perceive the heartening side of this disclosure. It proves the Communists to be a piffling sort of menace. With the executive and judicial branches of the government safely in their hands, they were utterly unable to make their designs effective upon, or even apparent to, the rest of the nation. So disorganized were they, indeed, that the heads of Communist governments abroad obviously never were informed that America was under Soviet control, and often spoke very harshly, and by name, of their American agents. The conclusion seems inescapable that America is able to absorb any number of such conspirators with no ill effects whatever.

Grateful as we are to the John Birch people for so encouraging a revelation, we nevertheless look upon the group, with some irritation, as an upstart in the field. As it happens, we are a member of a sort of semi-secret organization ourselves—one that has been in continuous existence for nearly two hundred years. To be sure, its attention has not been wholly fastened on fighting Communism, but it has done quite a lot of

good work, in its way. There are some who believe that this organization, whose members have infiltrated every craft and profession, deserves much of the credit for America's enjoyment of the oldest unaltered system of government in the world. The membership is impressively large, and, unlike that of the Communist Party or the John Birch Society, it is not composed of secret cells. In fact, the only real secrecy concerns the election of officers, which is performed in jealously guarded privacy. The rules of membership are few and basic, but upon many matters there is an unspoken consensus. It is generally considered bad form, for instance, for one member lightly and frivolously to accuse another of treachery—although it has been known to happen. The members receive no gaudy uniforms—not even so much as an armband—but each does receive a title. It is not an imposing title, we suppose, but it makes up in homely dignity whatever it may lack in romance, and to some members, at least, it has a certain glamour of its own. The title, dear John Birch Society, is Citizen.

Vision

WE slipped into the Fifth Annual International Automobile Show, at the Coliseum, last week just long enough to learn that if fins and fishtails are things of the past—and the not very distant past, at that—they are also very much to be reckoned with in the future. There were some half-dozen futuristic experimental models among the four hundred cars at the show, every one of them a throwback to the finny fifties, and a product of a new science the motor industry calls visioneering.

Our first glimpse into the future was by way of the Ford Motor Company's show, the Cyrolswept-back and bullet-shaped—two hundred and nine inches

of fin to now, we could almost see over the roof sliding down. We asked the Ford operative, a young lady in a futuristic white leotard, whether Ford expected people to get increasingly stoop-shouldered. "Oh, no," she said, patting her nose with a contemporary powder puff. "The two seats are luxurious chaise longues; the driver will be in a reclining position, and he can even take a nap at the wheel, as there is an automatic pilot. Actually, there is no wheel; awake, he steers with a dial, and he can see road conditions ahead through a snooperscope—a television set using infrared light, so it doesn't matter how dark or foggy it is outside. The car rides on two wheels, like a bicycle—Ford wants to get away from the old carriage idea of a rectangular box with a wheel at each corner—and it's balanced by a gyroscope and two outrigger wheels, which retract, like an airplane's, when the car moves. Best of all, you'll never run out of gas, because the car uses fuel cells."

We asked for a glimpse of the engine, and were told that the Ford visioneers had not got around to that.

"Won't people in the future have families or carry baggage?" a lad at our side asked pertinently, staring hard at the two chaise longues, which took up all the room. "Yes," she replied, "but they'll ride only in pairs, and they'll send their luggage on ahead."

We moved off to encounter a further bit of visioneering, the Simca Fulgur, which is a stubby car with two great wings sticking out of the back, as though a large bird had crashed halfway through the trunk. Although the Fulgur, which is designed to operate on electric power, has the full complement of four wheels, it would run largely on the nose, the hood, the trunk, the rear, the bow of a motorboat, would lift off the

